

is to say that it can neither be broken down further into meaningful parts, nor can it be connected with the Chumash languages through any reconstruction of its etymology. It stands alone and indivisible, facts which support its origin as a loan word, and one deriving from Chumash's nearest linguistic neighbor to the west: a Polynesian tongue.

Jones and Klar's arguments indirectly raise at least one question that is of particular interest to Easter Island studies. The correlation between a significant increase in Chumash population and social complexity and the advent of sewn-plank canoe technology, which they attribute to the increase in pelagic fishing that this technology made possible, is central to their argument. Nor are they alone in this; it is the opinion of a large portion of the archaeological community, as they acknowledge, and they summarize this stand carefully. In my opinion, anyone familiar with Easter Island archaeology will recognize that this is the reverse of a key component of the ecological collapse theory of Rapanui prehistory as presented by Bahn and Flenley, Diamond, and others: that the switch from sewn-plank canoe to dugout technology on Rapa Nui shows a correlation with a rapid *decrease* in population and social complexity due to the loss of pelagic fishing ability. It is true that the Chumash had a particular advantage in their sewn-plank canoe construction: abundant sources of natural tar with which to seal their canoes. In fact, asphalt plugs from canoes found in archaeological contexts are one of the earliest pieces of evidence for the *tomolo*. Nonetheless, in their discussion of Polynesian watercraft, Jones and Klar also discuss the extensive use of sewn-plank canoes in long distance voyaging in Polynesia. Could a technology that facilitates pelagic fishing in one culture herald its end in another? The pun is perhaps as unforgivable as it is inevitable, but this plank of Bahn and Flenley's thesis may not hold water.

Jones and Klar honed their argument through feedback from public presentations at several years of Society for American Archaeology meetings and drew on the advice of a wide range of experts. Instead of going on the defensive and setting themselves against the scholarly community, or attempting to circumvent the peer review process by parading their ideas in the popular media, they undertook at least two major revisions of this paper prior to its ultimate publication. Thus they have presented us with an argument that must be taken seriously. And it is. In a special symposium on April 2, 2005 at the annual SAA meeting in Salt Lake City, their ideas were received very favorably and without any of the expected antagonism. The general consensus among most of the half dozen discussants was that although Jones and Klar had not proven their case *conclusively*, they had definitely made a real and legitimate case, one that deserves serious attention and further research. Arguments for transoceanic diffusion have an extremely high bar in archaeology; Jones and Klar have passed that bar. Without question, this has to be one of the most sober and systematic cases for transoceanic diffusion ever proposed.

However one feels about the argument they advance, there is no question Jones and Klar have made a real contribution not only to both Polynesian and Chumash studies, but to the field of anthropology overall. Their paper is an exemplary piece of scholarship, their presentation impeccable,

their evidence impossible to dismiss. They have provided a model for the responsible presentation of arguments for limited diffusion, and any responsible discussion of this topic hereafter, in whatever part of the world it is set, must draw on their foundation. As Jones and Klar write: "Recognition of this apparent case of transoceanic contact suggests that diffusion and other forms of historic contingency still need to be considered in archaeological conceptualizations of North American prehistory" (Jones and Klar 2005:458). This does not mean, however, that they have opened the door to the wild-eyed fringe; instead, they have done exactly the opposite: they have taken back diffusion as a legitimate topic of discussion within the discipline of anthropology.

### *Island at the End of the World: The Turbulent History of Easter Island*

By Steven Roger Fischer, 2005

Reaktion Books, London

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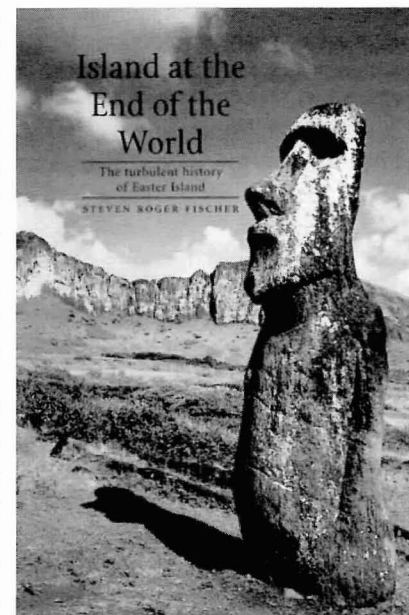
Hard cover, 304 pp., 15 halftones, notes and index

[www.reaktionbooks.co.uk](http://www.reaktionbooks.co.uk)

*Review by Scott Nicolay*

MANY READERS OF THIS JOURNAL will already have an entire bookshelf – or at least a large part of one – dedicated entirely to Rapa Nui. However, until now, those shelves will have lacked a straightforward and complete history of the island and its people. So much has been written about the island's prehistory that it has been easy to ignore the absence of an actual history. Only after one begins to read *Island at the End of the World* does it become obvious what has been missing all this time.

Although the outline of Rapa Nui history has long been available from a range of sources, in varying degrees of completeness and accuracy, Fischer fleshes out the full story for the first time, down to the details. Previously an overview of Rapanui history was best obtained by reading the reports of the major expeditions, along with a few other texts on special topics, such as Porteous' 1981 *The Modernization of Easter Island*. Even then, however, there were still large gaps, and many readers were left wanting to know more about such major players in Rapanui history as Alfonso Rapu and the prophetess Angata, of whom we previously had only the historical equivalent of snapshots. The complete story has never been told – not in one voice, in one piece, and with all



its components. Only someone with a deep familiarity with both the available source materials and the island itself could have accomplished this, and Fischer has risen to the challenge beautifully. In *Island at the End of the World*, the reader will learn new details about even familiar characters, such as Padre Sebastián Englert.

Fischer divides *Island at the End of the World* into five chapters: "The Polynesian Frontier," "White Men and Bird Men," "Pirates and Priests," "*Rancho Isla de Pascua*," and "Museum Island," along with a brief introduction covering the island's natural history prior to colonization. The chapters are thematic, each covering a major period in the island's history. The divisions reflect the shifts in political control of the island, and for this Fischer uses the metaphor of the birdman's egg, and the 'ao, which was the symbol of the power bestowed by the egg. He describes how that power shifted from the native Rapanui, to the megalomaniac Dutrou-Bornier and the missionaries, and then to Chile. The complex and competing machinations of the missionaries and the early agricultural landowners are particularly well fleshed out, providing the reader with the first really clear understanding of the period that nearly led to the final depopulation of the island.

Fischer chooses to tell most of the story in his own words, which helps to make this volume more readable and consistent, given the hundreds of sources he draws on. Here and there, however, he intersperses passages from various first-hand observers. Among these are some real gems, previously unpublished, such as the passage from a crew member aboard Captain Raine's *Surry*, which visited the island in 1821, and excerpts from the personal letters of William Mulloy. Overall, Fischer's voice makes for a clear and engaging read.

In the final chapter of the volume, Fischer outlines the major issues facing the island and its people today, such as increasing Chilean migration, regarding which he writes:

"Of course, this raises the issue of 'identity'. For that is what the egg – the 'ao, that temporal power that drives and defines the island – is all about. On present-day Easter Island there are four relevant identities that make up what it means to be an 'Easter Islander': *cultural identity*, *economic identity*, *proprietary identity* and *political identity*." Fischer defines the present conditions on the island through the struggle to establish these identities and their meaning. His analysis is insightful and intriguing.

Fischer's earlier work on the Easter Island script known as *Rongorongo* generated some controversy. It would be unfortunate for any readers of the *RNJ* to hesitate to read *Island at the End of the World* for this reason. Without going into detail regarding that controversy – as to do so would merely distract from the quality of the volume at hand – it is enough to say that none of the criticisms regarding Fischer's earlier publications are applicable in this case. Even the most careful reader will find little to criticize here, and much to praise.

If *Island at the End of the World* has any weakness, it is that it has only a few photos, and those it contains are rather small. To Fischer's credit, most of these photos have rarely, if ever, been published before. Although some readers may consider the small size and paucity of the photos a flaw, a wealth of Easter Island photos are already available in a number of volumes, some of which lack sufficient text to place them in

context. Fischer has provided that context.

In addition to his 1997 monograph on *Rongorongo* and *Glyphbreaker*, his popular account of his work on the decipherment of ancient scripts, Fischer has also written a trilogy of thematically structured histories, one each on the history of reading, writing and language. I myself have not read these, but the genuine quality of the current volume makes me anxious to remedy that situation.

This is a volume that should be a backbone of any Rapa Nui library, at least for the Anglophone reader. There was a real need for a comprehensive history of Rapa Nui. Quite happily, the right author undertook the task, and for now, it is hard to imagine anyone else improving on it anytime soon. Someday, we will see a history of the island written by a native historian. That, however, will probably come with the next phase of Rapa Nui history, which as Fischer suggests in his final pages, is likely to be one of increasing autonomy for the Rapanui people.

### ***Adorning the World. Art of the Marquesas Islands***

By Eric Kjellgren and Carol S. Ivory, 2005

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and

Yale University Press, New Haven and London;

ISBN 0-300-10712-9

Museum Catalogue, paper cover; 128 pages, lavishly illustrated (83 color plates; 29 sepia and black/white illustrations).

*Review by Georgia Lee*

THE OPENING ESSAY OF THIS EXCELLENT museum catalog is "Adorning the World," by Eric Kjellgren who introduces the island world of the Marquesas and includes some great early photographs ranging from Louis Le Breton's sketch made in 1838 to one taken by Pablo Picasso in his studio in 1910.

The second essay, by Carol S. Ivory, is titled "Art and Aesthetics in the Marquesas Islands." Ivory, the acknowledged expert on the arts of the Marquesas, brings the ancient together with the modern arts of today and discusses the artistic traditions and their likely sources. Ivory discusses the pan-Polynesian lack of a word for "art" in the Western sense, the importance of tattoo, and then the Marquesan design system, which is so distinctive. The next section deals with Tiki and the way the human body was/is used in Marquesan art, and this takes the discussion all the way back to Lapita, the roots of the Polynesians. Finally Ivory discusses changes in the arts of the Marquesas that have occurred due to changing economics and new influences. In an upbeat ending, Ivory notes the profound effects that have occurred as a result of arts festivals, sparking a cultural revival, and the creation of cooperative associations to market local Marquesan products.

The remainder of this upscale book is the catalog of the exhibit. Pieces exhibited have been brought in from private collections, most notably that of Mark and Carolyn Blackburn of Hawai'i; the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; Bishop Museum, Hawai'i; American Museum of Natural History, New York; Peabody Essex Museum, Salem; the Field Museum, Chicago; Peabody Museum, Cambridge; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; and of course, the Met's own collections. The color plates are glori-